CLAIM AMENDMENTS

1. (Currently Amended) A seal element for use in a packer comprising:

an energizing element adapted to store potential energy prior to the packer being run to a predetermined position in a well; and

a sealing layer covering at least a portion of the energizing element;

~~in which~~ wherein the energizing element is adapted to release at least some of the ~~uses~~ potential energy at the predetermined position to radially expand the energizing element and establish ~~stored in the energizing element to maintain~~ contact between the sealing layer and a wall enclosing the packer.

2. (Currently Amended) The seal element of claim 1 in which the energizing element ~~is~~ comprises a metallic substrate.

3. (Currently Amended) The seal element of claim 1 in which the energizing element ~~is~~ comprises a composite material.

4.-5. (Cancelled)

6. (Currently Amended) The seal element of claim 1 in which the energizing element ~~is~~ comprises a spring.

7.-8. (Cancelled)

9. (Original) The seal element of claim 1 in which the wall is an inner surface of a pipe.

10. (Original) The seal element of claim 1 in which the wall is a wellbore.

11. (Original) The seal element of claim 1 further comprising a support sleeve disposed around the energizing element.

12. (Currently Amended) The seal element of claim 1 in which the support sleeve comprises a ~~is made of~~ metal.

13. (Original) The seal element of claim 1 in which the support sleeve is embedded in the sealing layer.

14. (Currently Amended) An energized seal element for use in a packer deployed in a well comprising:

an energizing element having an interior surface and an exterior surface;

a support sleeve at least partially enclosing the energizing element; and

a sealing layer at least partially enclosing the support sleeve;

wherein the interior surface and the exterior surface of the energizing element are adapted to radially extend so that the exterior surface of the energizing element presses against the support sleeve to press the sealing layer against a wall enclosing the packer to establish a sealing contact between the sealing layer.and the wall

~~in which the energizing element keeps the sealing layer in sealing contact with a wall enclosing the packer~~.

15. (Original) The seal element of claim 14 in which the energizing element uses stored potential energy to maintain a contact force on the support layer in various operating environments.

16. (Currently Amended) The seal element of claim 14, wherein the energizing element, when actuated, deforms elastically into the support sleeve ~~layer~~ to produce a radially outward force on the sealing layer.

17. (Currently Amended) The seal element of claim 14 in which the sealing layer ~~is~~ comprises a thin layer of conformable material.

18. (Currently Amended) A method ~~of sealing~~ usable with a well ~~annulus~~ comprising:

storing potential energy in a seal element of a packer before deploying the packer downhole in the well;

after the storing, running the packer into the well;

~~placing a packer having an energized seal element in a wellbore;~~

positioning the packer at a position at which a seal is to be formed in an annulus of the well;

setting the packer by releasing at least some of the potential energy ~~actuating the energized seal element~~ to form a seal between the packer and a wall surrounding the packer; and

maintaining the seal using at least some of the potential energy remaining in the potential energy stored in the energized seal element.

19. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 18 in which the storing ~~actuating of the energized seal element~~ is performed by at least deforming an elastic substrate of the ~~energized~~ seal element.

20.-21. (Cancelled).

22. (New) A seal element usable with a packer, comprising:

a support sleeve;

a sealing layer at least partially enclosing the support sleeve; and

a bow adapted to remain retracted while the packer is run into a well and radially extend against the support sleeve to press the sealing layer against a wall that encloses the packer to form a sealing contact between the sealing layer and the wall.

23. (New) The seal element of claim 22, further comprising:

a wedge adapted to engage the bow to radially extend the bow.

24. (New) The seal element of claim 22, wherein the bow is adapted to elastically deform in response to contacting the support sleeve to store mechanical energy to keep the sealing layer in sealing contact with the wall.

25. (New) A seal element for use in a packer deployed in a well, comprising:

a support sleeve;

a sealing layer at least partially enclosing the support sleeve; and

a tube comprising slots, the tube adapted to radially extend against the support sleeve to press the sealing layer against a wall enclosing the packer to establish a sealing contact between the sealing layer and the wall.

26. (New) The seal element of claim 25, wherein the slots comprise helical slots.

27. (New) The seal element of claim 25, wherein the tube is adapted to expand when compressed axially.

28. (New) A seal element for use in a packer deployed in a well, comprising:

a support sleeve;

a sealing layer at least partially enclosing the support sleeve; and

a swelling material adapted to mix with a reactant to radially extend against the support sleeve to press the sealing layer against a wall enclosing the packer to establish a sealing contact between the sealing layer and the wall.

29. (New) A seal element for use in a packer deployed in a well, comprising:

a support sleeve;

a sealing layer at least partially enclosing the support sleeve; and

a container adapted to receive and be energized by a compressible material to cause the container to radially extend to cause the support sleeve to press the sealing layer against a wall of the packer to form a sealing contact between the sealing layer and the wall.

30. (New) The seal element of claim 29, wherein the compressible material comprises a gas.